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ABSTRACT

Despite evidence of ineffectiveness, the American educational system remains tied to the child-centered, Piagetian approach to educating children. Based on the romantic notions of Rousseau, this approach maintains that children should not be viewed as receptacles of information that is dispensed by teachers but as active discoverers in a learning environment. As a consequence, two key elements of the modern classical pedagogical approach, didactic teaching or explaining and the systematic study of academic subjects, have been discarded, with the result that American children rank among the lowest academically of industrialized nations. To explain the disastrous results of the romantic approach, proponents have offered a multitude of excuses from too much television, a school year that is too short, pushy parents, centralized school board systems, and the argument that poor results stem from inadequate testing methods, not learning deficiencies. Historically, however, the romantic notions of holistic theme teaching as opposed to academic disciplines and the role of the teacher as facilitator have never been successful, having been attempted and abandoned by the Russians in the 1930s and, more recently, by the British. A return to the modern classical approach could make the education of American children the envy of nations instead of the noneducation that it is today. (BCY)

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THE NONEDUCATION OF AMERICA'S CHILDREN

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THE NONEDUCATION OF AMERICA'S CHILDREN

Now that Great Britain has adopted a modern classic academic education for its elementary schools, the United States is the last major nation still clinging to that once chic romantic conception of education that is known variously as child-centered, nurturing, creative, non-structured or Piagetian, named for the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget.

For the last fifty-plus years, the American and British educational establishments had been acting virtually in tandem in a fruitless pursuit of the illusory promises of what had been promoted as a scientific process of education. But instead of graduating students who were brilliant thinkers as well as creative enrichers of society, their once highly regarded public school systems became mired in shockingly low standards of academic achievement, a national tragedy for both countries.[1]

The British decision to abandon the romantic came after the adoption of national standards in 1988 had failed to result in significant improvement. Studies of schoolrooms showed that romantic methods of self-learning were profoundly inadequate and that modern classic teaching routinely

achieved far superior results. In rejecting the romantic, they joined with the overwhelming majority of the world's nations in using a modern classic academic philosophy, whose methods are eminently adaptable to the swiftly changing needs and sensibilities of the modern world.

America, on the other hand, remains bogged down in an educational theory that is tied to an 18th century romantic ideology. We continue trying to make workable an educational system that has daunted all reformers. As the New York Times pointed out in the last election, the best efforts of such adept institutional modernizers as Perot in Texas, Clinton in Arkansas, and Lamar Alexander, the educational secretary under President Bush, accomplished little more than the stemming of the tide of educational failure.[2] Their uncritical acceptance of the prevailing romantic ideology of nonteaching thwarted the possibility of any dramatic improvement.

Unless there is a realization that the collapse of our educational system is due to the same causes that brought down the British, we cannot hope to halt our unconscionable high school drop-out rate that averages twenty-five percent, or correct an educational system that graduates children who can only minimally read or write, add or think, or eliminate a built-in structural bias that favors those already socially or economically favored. Without such a recognition, the dumbing of America will continue.

The United States, which once prided itself on having the finest democratic educational system in the world, now has an educational establishment resigned to being captive to classrooms where a child's success or failure depends on his or her social class. America's once-upon-a-time boast that the children of today's workers could become tomorrow's lawyers or scientists has been replaced with the old aristocratic dogma that the poor are largely uneducatable.

It is now possible to predict an elementary school's academic level by knowing the economic or social class of its students. Those serving upscale communities, whether in city or suburb, receive the highest grades, the middle class schools are caught in the average, while schools in communities of the poor or the disadvantaged consistently receive Fs. As national statistics have shown, this has little to do with the amounts of money spent on a school.[3] What it does reflect is that the romantic system of child-centered teaching, with the teacher acting primarily as a facilitator for a student's presumed self-learning, is extremely dependant on a child's home background. It poses but cannot resolve the obvious puzzler: How do I become educated? By being middle class. How do I become middle-class? By being educated.

The romantics invited this dilemma by discarding from our elementary schools, which provide the foundation for each child's education, two of the most fundamental and powerful pedagogical techniques: didactic teaching, which is nothing more or less than instructional teaching (what the romantics scornfully call "telling"), and the systematic study of academic subjects. These classic methods bring democracy to the classroom for they teach by appealing to every child's desire for a conscious understanding of the world. The teacher provides the explanations, understandings, and information necessary for every child's cognitive learning while also engaging all the complex capabilities that enable elementary school children to become educated. Nothing is ruled out.

The weakness of the child-centered programs in which children are self-educators and teachers merely facilitators is felt by all the students. None receive a substantial education, one that measures up to their individual abilities, because of the severe limitations of the romantic's rigid theories of developmental stages and teacher non-interventionism. Piagetian education, our prevailing methodology, has been called a torrent of negatives - a long list of what children are supposedly not capable of learning, ranging from a conscious knowledge of spoken and written English to factual history. For bright students and the so-called disadvantaged, this is doubly damaging. The bright are left unchallenged and bored while those needing

teacher instruction have only their homes to make up for the shortcomings of the classroom.

The impact of America's inadequate educational program has been especially apparent in worldwide rankings. It would be reasonable to expect the United States to score among the leading nations, considering the extraordinary sums of money which we are willing to spend on our schools, amounts that far exceed that of any other nation. Instead, according to the National Education Goals Panel, we rank in both math and science well below such countries as Korea, Russia and Hungary, and roughly on a par with Spain, one of the poorer and more backward of western European nations. Overall, the United States places at the lowest level among industrialized countries, a dismal international standing.[4]

According to available statistics, we would have to improve our public school education by almost fifty percent to reach acceptable world class standards. But the nations achieving these standards all use the superior methods of the modern classical while we remain tied to the romantic.

The concepts of a child-centered romantic education, derived from the Swiss 18th century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, were never widely adopted in the world except for the English speaking nations. There has been even less interest internationally in the latest romantic theories, those elaborated by the psychologist Piaget and his followers,

again except for the English-speaking nations who have probably been under the equally romantic Peter Pan syndrome of never having to grow up and go to school. The French complained that Piagetian theory excessively reflected the mind of a geometer. The Italians objected to its lack of an historical sensibility. West Germans questioned its suitability for a modern diverse society. The Soviets concluded that its methods were class-bound and installed their own adaptation of a classical education with their own developmental psychology. The Latin American, Asian and African nations, similarly, adopted classical theory blended with individual cultural traditions.

The worldwide popularity of the modern classical lies in the common continuing belief that it is the responsibility of each generation to pass on its knowledge to the next, thereby sustaining and hopefully improving civilization. It derives from the educational system developed in classical Athens, the founder of democracy, and continues to this day as the great carrier of humanity's wisdom, unrestricted to nation or to continent.[5] Its teaching methods, especially for elementary schools, are built around the natural instructional techniques of telling and example, used by all societies from the simplest to the most sophisticated. It emphasises academic learning not only for its own pleasures and uses in the pursuit of

happiness, but for its educative value in developing in each student that sense of individual worth that comes from knowledge and conscious understanding. It provides an education for all, irrespective of class, an essential for a democratic society.

The romantic educators reject such modern classic principles of education as hopelessly out-of-date. Their continuing enthrallment with a child-centered teaching system speaks volumes to the seductive power of the romantic ideology. America's educators remain in the grip of a failed theory, despite continuing evidence that the collapse of America's public school system, like that of the British, has been due to the adoption of romantic teaching some half-century ago in the midst of the Great Depression.

Under the banner of the latest Piagetian researches in child psychology, the American romantics continue to claim an educational program that is crafted to allow each student to develop critical and analytical thinking, high personal character, and social responsibility. They boast of alone being capable of educating children for a democratic society, denouncing modern classic methods as reactionary, unsuited to the contemporary world, fit only for dull-witted passive "receptors" into whose brains teachers pour something called academic knowledge. With such a self-congratulatory vision of an educational utopia vs. an educational hell it

is no wonder that the romantic exerts such a continuing power to self-enchant.

The reality, however, is that none of the romantic child-centered methods of teaching have been successful at providing even a semblance of fulfilling their professed goals. Neither the "self-learning by doing" Progressive Education of John Dewey nor the "self-learning by discovery" Piagetian theories have given our children an education that can equal the achievement of the modern classical. This clear failure has been the bane of the romantics.

Since the romantics refuse to consider that their theories may be wrong, they have had an impossible task trying to explain why they have been such a dismal failure in the real world of public school classrooms despite having had the luxury of decade after decade of experimentation as well as extraordinary amounts of financial funding. They offer a multitude of excuses ranging from excessive television watching by children to too short a school year, from pushy parents to improperly trained teachers, from centralized school board systems to legislative oversight committees. Hardly any aspect of American life, whether involving children, parents, teachers, or elected officials, is exempted from a share in the blame except the educators themselves. Some even dispute that there is anything wrong, charging that the testing methods being used are unfair.

Others place the cause for failure at American society's racism and poverty and argue that until these are eliminated we cannot expect any improvement.

Most educators, however, continue to insist that given yet more time and money, those two continuing demands, they will develop innovative methods for a world-class educational system. It is an assertion they have made repeatedly over the years, only to end up in repeated failures. One of their latest innovations - classrooms devoted to "project" and "theme" learning, the least academic of romantic methodologies - turns out to be little more than a rehash of the Soviet Union's official system of Progressive Education which they dropped in 1931 as an educational disaster.

The United States remains largely alone in continuing to champion a romantic 18th century theory of education that is passé, an experiment that has been tried and failed. Not only is there overwhelming empirical evidence of its failure, there is also ample research that disproves Piaget's assumptions and conclusions, point by point, making a shambles of his "scientific" psychology of child development.

The acknowledged originator of the philosophy of a romantic education, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, founded his theory on the argument that man had been corrupted by society and must return to a state of nature to retrieve his lost goodness. Voltaire, once an ardent admirer of Rousseau's writings, was prompted to comment that he declined returning to walking about on all fours.

Rousseau's interest was in an education in which a child's cognitive development would be independent of adult society. There would be a closely guarded nurturing that would allow for the emergence from the "natural" child of the "natural" adult, the noble savage. In this way, the child would self-learn as desire, necessity and individual nature drove him or her, achieving a knowledge of the world that would be untainted by corrupt adult notions. "Let him know nothing because you have told him, but because he has learnt it by himself," was his advice to parents and teachers, establishing a basic tenet of what has since been labeled child-centered learning whether under the aegis of Pestalozzi, Prussia, John Dewey or Piaget.[6]

In Rousseau's teaching method that appealed to "nature" and "naturalness," there was clearly little that was at all natural once past the time of breast-feeding and babyhood. What Rousseau proposed was thoroughly artificial, manipulative and contrived, an educational method never before practiced any place on earth. All societies, all parents, use the natural teaching method of telling their children what it is they should know, teaching by words and by example. It is the basis of modern classic education which stresses that teaching provide the student with understanding and reason rather than Rousseau's reliance on self-learning through self-experience, discovery or invention as desire or necessity may dictate.

It would have amused Rousseau that the United States has become his most famous educational devotee. His idea of a good society was closer to ancient totalitarian Sparta which he greatly admired for its communal tribal sensibilites, its disdain for learning, its hostility to democracy, and its consideration of women principally as part of a eugenics program for the breeding of healthy warrior-sons.[7] He would also have been pleasantly startled to note the degree to which his call for a non-democratic communalism, in which everyone submits to the General Will, has insinuated itself into both educational theory and a certain kind of intellectual anti-intellectualism enraptured by the primitive and the barbaric. It has become almost de rigeur for a book on childhood to devote some attention to the raising of children in tribal societies, making the reader wonder if it is a return to pre-literate culture that is actually being proposed.

Contemporary romantics, followers of Rousseau's notions of a supposedly sublime "natural" way of learning, ridicule the modern classic belief in the school's role as the carrier of civilization, with teachers bringing the enlightenment of knowledge and intellect to every child. Nor do they accept that language, that natural give and take between child and teacher or parent, plays a vital role in the developing thought of the child. Nor do they acknowledge that learning is essentially a social encounter with all of society contibuting to the child's cognitive growth. They

insist on an education in which children will self-learn, untainted by the supposed "knowledge" of adults. Each child will then develop creatively, no longer bound by the past, free to reinvent society along with his and her peers, recreating civilization de novo. Such a society, they assure us, will be far better than anything yet achieved.

The "scientific" foundation for this romantic view is the developmental psychology authored by the child psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980). He believed that only intuitive learning should be permitted until the age of seven (Early Childhood stage) and then, until twelve, learning by logical reason was possible in contact with the concrete (Operational Stage). In both stages, children self-learnt on a nonconscious sublinguistic level. Instructional teaching was worthless and harmful. It should be Rousseau in the schoolhouse.

Piaget claimed to arrive at this theory from purely scientific research. He acknowledged, however, Rousseau as the originator and it seems more than likely that his youthful enthusiasm for Rousseau played a decisive role in the direction and results of his studies.[8]

Piaget maintained an inflexible view of the world-wide applicability of his developmental stages. For example, when it was pointed out to him that the children of Martinique, a 90% black French island, tested for his theory four years behind the mainland French, he sought to absolve his theory by resorting to a racist explanation: "Their society, which is lazy." He then went on to recount a racist joke implying that they were also very stupid.[9]

For Piagetians, adult teaching must be replaced with a "learning environment." Learning is then supposedly taking place by a child's spontaneous "getting it" and internalized ("active") thinking. Proper nurturing requires that teachers must never give verbal lessons but act only as facilitators in presenting the child with "learning" material whether in the form of books or worksheets or field trips or science activities or etc. within a peer group setting. The peer group process, with whose learning dynamics the teacher must not interfere (unless, presumably, guns have been drawn) is called socialization.[10]

The British report was highly critical of these methods. "Piagetian theories about developmental ages and stages led to chronologically fixed notions of readiness, thus depressing expectations and discouraging teacher intervention. More recent studies show what children given effective teaching can achieve... They place proper emphasis on the teacher as teacher rather than 'facilitator.'"

The irony in these contrasting views of the purposes and methods of the education of children is that the modern classic education to which Great Britain now turns and which has been proving itself around the world was first pioneered by the United States. When our public school system was established in the 1840's, America's educators rejected a Rousseau-based child-centered education in use in

Prussia, the first modern European state to have established a free, compulsory educational system. The Prussian way was strongly promoted in America by the Massachusetts educator Horace Mann, who even devised a set of how-to-read books based on the whole-word method proposed by Rousseau.[11]

The American and Prussian aims were, however, quite divergent as the Boston school teachers pointed out to Mann. America was interested in an education to provide the enlightenment of reason and knowledge for its citizenry, both for their individual happiness and for the sustenance of a democracy. Prussia looked upon its program in military terms, emulating classical Sparta, an education that would make the Germans one folk, one nation, with one Kaiser. The Rousseau-based education adopted by the Prussians was the Pestalozzi system, named for a Swiss educator who had converted Rousseau's theories into a practical school method for the orphaned poor of Switzerland. Since the poor were considered uneducatable, Pestalozzi's achievement was considered most unusual. His system fitted Prussian purposes, providing just enough of a limited education to the common masses to suit Prussia's nationalistic desires. At best, it could lead to a trade school, furnishing competent labor for the new factories of the industrial revolution, a fact not lost on Horace Mann. A classical education, considered beyond the capability of the peasantry and laborers, was restricted entirely to the upper classes.

America's early educators defied the European

traditional wisdom and adopted classical education. It was their genius to transform what had been an aristocratic schooling for gentlemen into a democratic institution that was meaningful for all in this new nation, this democracy that was still proving itself in the eyes of the world. The educators were quite aware of the magnitude of their decision, relying on the ancient educational tradition established in democratic classical Athens, that city of "prating" Greeks as Rousseau had disdainfully referred to it. The principles were clear: to provide for each child an education that would develop reason and understanding, wisdom and happiness, individuality and fulfillment. A recognized problem was devising a state-run educational system, free and secular, that was not imbued with the totalitarian spirit of the "Fatherland" that characterized the Spartan and Prussian but rather with a "liberal arts" enlightenment.

The ubiquitous little red schoolhouse that dotted the American landscape joined with the overcrowded city schoolhouses to bring a firm knowledge of the basics of its time - the three Rs plus geography, history, physiology, and civics - to almost everyone in America, except in the southern slave or ex-slave states. Children received a solid educational foundation, especially valuable for those who went on to higher learning to become our home-grown professional class. We forget today how radical such a policy was, remembering only that classroom teaching in early grades was based upon rote drill and that teachers kept order with

a stern hand. But rote drill and rules of strict behavior have long been stripped away from classic teaching, as have other antiquated practices.[12]

The extraordinary success of this American system lay in its simplicity, its respect for every student, its flexibility and its democratic ability to educate every child regardless of economic, social or cultural background. The classic methodology called for the teaching of every subject in a systematic and rational manner, appealing to the child's growing cognitive ability to understand, to make sense of the world. From the day the child began first grade, he or she learnt that there was no mystery to education. All that was required was for the child to apply his or her mental abilities and, with the instructional help of the teacher, the child developed a knowledge of writing, reading and mathematics, those three great wonders of civilization and the necessary foundations for further education.

In acquiring this knowledge in the academic method, from the ABCs and 1,2,3s, the child is also learning the essence of rational thought, simple logic and causal relationships. "If I see the letters D and O and G strung together, and knowing each letter and its sound, I then know positively, without guessing or pictures or story clues, that the word is DOG." And, similarly, "If I know that Jennifer has three apples and Jimmy has two apples, then they have all together five apples and so three and

two add up to five and I know this positively." It is such conscious understandings which children in classic early grades learn so thoroughly, a reason why they do so well in the basics and in further academic learning. It empowers them to think critically and analytically, to reason, to problem-solve, to understand the rationale of personal responsibility for one's actions, to have that self-conscious awareness that comes with knowledge.

The adoption of a romantic educational method some fifty-plus years ago has meant the abandonment of this classic methodology and led to the present disastrous quality of our elementary schools, undoubtedly at their lowest level since the establishment of our system of public schools. We have a romantic methodology of teaching which is all ideological dogma and very little common sense, a teaching method which prohibits a teacher from explaining to a child that the letters C and A and T spell out the word for CAT or that if John has one orange and Jane has two oranges, then together they both have three oranges. And, as Professor E. D. Hirsch, Jr. has pointed out in "Cultural Literacy," we have a curriculum in which subject matter, the content of studies, has been so fragmented and stripped of knowledge as to offer little in the way of learning.

The British, facing these same problems, instituted in 1988 a series of educational reforms that have since been proposed for the United States: giving parents free choice

in school selection and establishing a national curriculum with national testing. The British experience was that the free choice system had little discernable impact and that curriculum reform, with its romantic generated standards, was having only minor positive effects in raising academic levels, especially in the all-important primary grades. They also discovered that the national testing program, drawn up by child-centered educators, was of little value in the lower grades and they consequently returned to standard testing in elementary school rather than the highly subjective Authentic Assessment that dominated the new national testing.

By the end of 1991, with only slight general improvement indicated, the kind that typically comes whenever there is the excitement of new programs, the British decided they would at long last take a realistic look at actual classroom teaching practices.

"If we cannot get primary school standards right," the Secretary of State for Education and Science wrote, "we shall continue to face difficulties throughout the education service. The foundations on which all else rests are built in primary schools. Where those foundations are strong, children acquire habits of work and the basics of literacy and numeracy essential to the rest of their education and their adult lives. If the foundations are insecure, we risk a lifetime's disadvantage for those pupils."[13]

The examining committee was clearly determined to avoid the rhetoric of ideology and to concentrate on actual classroom methods and their measurable results. They saw their role as requiring an "examination of current teaching method from the point of view of evidence rather than simply theory."[14]

Their report, "Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools," established unequivocally that the typical child-centered methods of a child's self-learning with the teacher acting primarily as psychologist-facilitator simply did not work well. They failed to provide a solid foundation for the average student and they were doubly deficient both for the disadvantaged child who lacked the home resources needed to make up for the weak school education and for the highly talented students who needed a greater challenge than was being provided.

Among the classroom practices that they faulted were many which are duplicated in America's classrooms:

"There is a persistent and damaging belief that pupils should never be told things, only asked questions...we want, therefore, to underline how important it is for teachers to explain ideas to their pupils."

"There is the belief that teachers must never point out

when a pupil is wrong. Profer anything but unqualified praise...There is no reason, in fact, why constructive critical feedback and encouragement should be regarded as incompatible."

"...the research evidence demonstrates very clearly that the level of cognitive challenge provided by the teacher is a significant factor in performance."

"...teachers need to reject the essentially unrealistic belief that pupils' individual differences provide the central clue as to how simultaneous teachings of many individuals can be organized. The goals of primary education are common to all pupils. It is with this reality that planning for teaching should start."

The British decided that they must return to didactic teaching accompanied by that exceptional range of teacher explanations and challenges, most of which have been banned from contemporary child-centered classrooms. "Teaching," they affirmed, referring to unnatural methods enforced by the reigning child-centered educational psychologists, "is not applied child development."

While a continuing study of elementary schools must seem the most obvious of necessities, the United States educational establishment has consistently refused such an examination. For example, in "A Nation at Risk," the last major comprehensive examination of our school system, made

in 1983 by a special commission appointed by President Reagan, the investigators freely critiqued the nation's junior highs, middle schools, high schools and colleges. Elementary schools were barely mentioned, despite their obvious basic role and the billions of Federal dollars spent on them. In effect, they had been declared off-limits. There seemed to be an assumption that elementary schools only taught the three Rs and that it was not significant in what manner the children learnt such "skills." In fact, these are not mere "skills" but fundamental knowledge, which took mankind thousands of years to develop. And they are not now satisfactorally taught.

The reaction of the American educational establishment to the extraordinary step taken by the British has been to ignore it. Up to this time, the British and American educators had been acting virtually as partners. Both had abandoned the modern classical during the Great Depression of the 1930's for the social reform promises of Progressive Education, the "learning through experience" educational method associated with the philosopher John Dewey, the educator William Heard Kilpatrick of Teachers College and the behaviorist psychologist Edward Thorndike.[15] Progressive educators, especially Dewey, tirelessly promoted the notion that a child-centered education was to be equated with democracy though their idea of "Democracy" bore more resemblance to Rousseau's authoritarian General Will than to the founding principles of the American nation.

Both countries redid their schools in accordance with new doctrines that called for learning-by-doing, the New Math, classrooms that were "fun," scientist concepts of knowledge, developmental readiness, and whole-word reading programs. But despite the grand rhetoric which accompanied this revolution, both countries witnessed the slow collapse of once successful systems. In America, SAT scores for college admission reached their peak with the last generation of students prior to the introduction of Progressive Education and have been on the decline ever since.

In the 1960's, the educational establishments in both countries reacted to popular dissatisfaction by discarding Progressive Education, but then shifted to the romantic psychological theories of Jean Piaget who called for schools where children self-learnt by being discoverers and inventors. Instead of reaping the rewards of a program that claimed to be scientifically attuned to how children think and learn, both countries witnessed stagnation and a general sense of continuing deterioration, especially in the curriculum.

It was against this background that Great Britain decided to launch its thorough reform. Meanwhile, America remains committed to its romantic programs, pushing our elementary schools into further fruitless experimentation. The proposal for the establishment of national standards would appear to be very promising, but the British experience has been that to make it effective it must be accompanied with the reintroduction of academic classic teaching.

What America's educators seem concerned with of late has been to call for the elimination of standardized testing for Authentic Testing. This means of judging how well our students are doing will consist largely of a review of a student's classroom work and portfolios, a system used in art schools but one that hardly seems relevant for academic studies. Such Authentic Assessment, educators have assured the public, will prove how well educated our children really are. As judge and jury or their own endeavors, this would not be surprising. In actuality, our students will not be learning anything more than at present.

The program for Authentic Assessment could be seen as another move toward obfuscation, toward confusing the public and its legislators, The most notorious example of such educational establishment dissembling occured during the so-called Back-to-Basics decade of the 1970's. With the collapse of the methods of Progressive Education in the 1960s, there was enormous pressure brought by the public to bring back a classic educational system that taught reading by phonics and standard mathematics instead of the New Math's set theory. Federal and state legislators took drastic steps to insure the teaching of fundamentals, including standardized tests to assure such instruction.

America's romantic educators, however, had no intention of returning to an academic classroom. What they did instead was to accomodate the demands for learning-how-to-read by phonics by introducing some phonics teaching into their

various systems of whole-word reading, a "reform" which had actually begun in the 1950's under public pressure brought on by Rudolph Flesch's exceptionally popular "Why Johnny Can't Read."[16] In mathematics, they reintroduced a degree of basic arithmatic and dropped much of the verbal overload of the New Math but without actually dropping the New Math, There seemed to be a return to teaching "basics" in the classic tradition with children again learning their ABCs and their 1,2,3s, a mistaken perception which the educators encouraged the public to believe. Actually, the basics continued to be taught in the romantic method of considering them as "skills" that were to be self-learnt on a sub-linguistic level of "getting it."

Despite all this hugger-mugger, the small amount of classic instructional teaching that was brought into the classroom was enough to stem the decline of education in America. Tests showed that while there might not have been improvement at least there was no further deterioration. But in the annals of America's romantic educators, this proved that the Back-to-Basic movement was of little value and that the formal aspects of education should be solely the province of educators and not of the public or their state and federal representatives. (It is necessary to note, however, that in a study of reading test scores during this

period, Professor Jeanne Chall, America's leading expert on childhood reading education, pointed out that there was a direct correlation between improvement in reading and the extent of the reuse of phonics in the classroom.[17])

While the educational establishment was successful in convincing the legislators that the Back-to-Basics movement had been a failure, despite the fact that they had never actually returned to basics, the educators did learn that even a modicum of instruction enhanced childhood learning. What we find in today's classrooms is still the singular romantic devotion to self-learning through nurturing and socialization but with varying amounts of manipulative instructional devices, from pencil-and-paper worksheets to homework to the latest in computerware.

But, increasingly, under the influence of the Piaget theory that children learn only in a peer group social setting and not with their teachers or parents, schools are requiring children to work in groups or pairs. To further this child-to-child learning, schools have combined ages in classes, putting six and seven year olds together, seven and eight years olds in the same class, etc.

When parents complain, as they do across the country, that teachers are no longer teaching their children, they are correct. The fault however lies not with the teachers,

most of whom are dedicated professionals, but with their training in the romantic method of non-interventionist non-teaching. The older more experienced teachers often ignore theoretical doctrine and develop instructional methods that work, despite the child-centered textbooks and workbooks that they are required to use. When New York City, in the interest of saving money, requested the retirement in 199[illegible] of the older teachers, the consequence was a sharp drop in academic test scores.

What middle class parents now know is that if they wish their children to learn how to read and write, they have to teach them at home. And if they wish their children to receive something resembling a decent education, they must fully participate in their children's homework as well as their everyday academic studies - providing the understanding and explanations that are taboo for the teacher. While educators speak warmly of involving parents in their children's education, they usually do this with the stern prohibition that parents are not to teach.

Contributing to the decline of our schools have been the romantics' restrictions placed on the teaching of subjects, of course content. Since the teacher may not intervene in a child's self-teaching, since only the child

may give answers or "tell" while the teacher is restricted to asking questions, it becomes an impossible task to effectively teach subjects, to provide that knowledge which has been considered the essence and purpose of school. But the romantic educators discard knowledge, replacing it with "process" as the raison d'etre of education. What is knowledge? they rhetorically ask and immediately answer that there is no such thing, that every generation creates its own knowledge and that therefore it is pointless to teach it. Instead they teach process, the how-to, the supposed scientific methodology of everything, with little concern for subject, content, reason, or purpose, all those philosophical questions which define a civilization, essential concerns which also excite children who ask not only how but also why and what.

The scientist view of education as conceived by romantic educators was ably expressed in a 1991 statemment of New York State's Department of Education: "Unlike earlier periods when one demonstrated one's intellect by how much one knew, i.e. how many facts one has at his/her command, increasingly we recognize the mark of intellect to be the capacity independently to analyze, manipulate, synthesize, and critically interpret information in the interest of problem solving."[18] This curious rationale seems to denigrate knowledge as only facts and as unimportant in the role of

intellect, but without knowledge which must rest on facts, how can intellect comprehend, reason and act?

What appears to have happened is that our romantic educators, in "teaching" math and English and other academic subjects as skills to be learnt on a sublinguistic and intuitive level, thereby stripped them of thought and content, converting them from a conscious study in logic and imagination to one of procedures and processes. Problem solving as well as critical and anaytical thinking were lost. Consequently, schools now have special programs devoted to these missing "skills," though how "getting it" can develop conscious thinking remains a conundrum. At most, these recent programs appear to be a call for the technocratic mind. But it hardly needs pointing out that the ultimate technocratic problem solver was the notorious Adolph Eichmann.

Some romantic educators, in their confusion about how children learn academic subjects, justify a dismissal of separate subjects on the Gestalt (and Piagetian) theory that children have only a global view and cannot separate their perception into categories. In place of the teaching of subjects - geography, social sciences, science, art - a class will adopt a Topic or Theme. The class will then spend its time detailing - such as in A Trip to Mali - all that must be done to get there (passports, etc.) and what can be expected to be seen once there. Theoretically, such "teaching" will encompass all the academic subjects in a pseudo-real life manner, thereby making them "concrete operational" and

leading to learning. Such collaborative class efforts become hardly more than extensive copying and an "art" project from which the students learn very little. What dominates such classroom activity is not subject matter but busyness and procedures. The child is caught in a maze of directions which offer little in the way of knowledge or cognitive challenge.

Such "theme" teaching has never proved to be successful, either in America where it was first proposed in 1918 as the "project method" by the Progressive Educator William Kilpatrick, or in the Soviet Union where it was adopted as national educational policy during the 1920's. The Soviet experience was the most extensive: "Instead of the study of subjects," they proclaimed, "we require the study of life itself." Standard textbooks dealing with subjects were abolished, testing and grading were eliminated for the equivalent of authentic assessment. The results were a dismal failure. Soviet "surveys of fourth- and seventh-graders from 1929 to 1931...found an inadequate grasp of grammar, spelling, history, the sciences and mathematics," the same kinds of romantic education failure that are now echoed in the United States. In 1931, despite protests from the educators that all they needed was more time and money, the Soviet Union ended the "project method" and installed a modern classic system.[19]

The British, in summarizing their objection to the elimination of subject teaching from elementary school

curriculum, drew a clear distinction between the romantic and classic approach: "To resist subjects on the grounds that they are inconsistent with children's views of the world is to confine them within their existing modes of thought and deny them access to some of the most powerful tools for making sense of the world which human beings have ever devised."

But even when the romantics are required to accept separate subject teaching, as often in the case of science, they are so enwrapt in ideology that cognitive learning is thwarted. Since it is impossible to provide a systematic program in science without a meaningful amount of didactic teaching, the most that the elementary schools offer is "table top" science, a series of Mr. Wizard-type displays, but without his clear explanations. Children are pressed to have "learning outcomes" and thereby "self-invent" science.

In Chicago, recently, an expensive, elementary school science program was installed, patterned on the romantic methodology. As described by one of its devisors, its goal is not the education of children but making science "tremendously attractive to inner-city children - if teachers let the children talk and work in groups ... if the teacher is the facilitator rather than the font of all knowledge, striving not for correct answers but for clues as to how the child thinks." This may delight manipulative educators, but it clearly diminishes and demeans the child.[19]

The study of mathematics is particularly caught up in theoretical concerns. There are first of all the Piagetians for whom the logico-mathematical mind plays the key role in a child's cognitive understanding of the world. Since this is so much at the heart of their theories, it would be reasonable to presume that children should have little difficulty in learning math if Piagetian methods were used. Secondly, there are the theories connected with the New Math that replaced Old Math in the 1950s-1960s in the United States. Educators reasoned that since the New Math was built on a purely scientific base, it should prove to be more comprehensible for school children. Thirdly, there was the concern by mathematicians and romantic educators that the subject be taught as a "whole" so that mathematics was viewed as more than just arithmatic and computation.

Piaget embraced the New Math as closely reflective of his views on the development of what he called the child's logico-mathematical mind. He saw in the New Math the solution to the difficulties that his followers were having teaching the Old Math with Piagetian methods. "The most abstract and general structures of contemporary mathematics [New Math] are now much more closely linked," he wrote, "to the natural operational structures of the intelligence and of thought than were the particular structures that provided the framework for classical mathematics and teaching methods."[21]

With three such extraordinary theoretical bodies -

mathematicians, Piagetians and educators - assuring us of the brilliance of their insights, it was expected that all of America's children must certainly become whiz kids in mathematics. Instead, mathematics teaching in America's elementary schools verges upon being a disaster. In a 1991 international test of 13 year olds, the United States ranked 15th, well below Taiwan, Hungary, the former Soviet Union, and China, among others.[22]

Our educators' explanation, aside from those wornout clichés of more money, more experimental teaching, racism, poverty, etc., has been to assert that the fault lies not in our childrens' education but in out-dated testing methods instead of Authentic Assessment. In June of 1991, Vermont completed a one-year pilot project using such testing methods. Since Authentic Assessment is notoriously subjective, the testers made a special effort at objectivity, more possible when dealing with mathematics than with reading and writing.

For decades child-centered educators have decried the emphasis within the classroom of teaching to pass tests. Yet this is exactly what the romantic educators did, according to the report out of Vermont, concentrating on "problem solving and mathematical communications," since these were established as the focus of the testing.[23]

Though Vermont's romantic educators applauded Authentic Assessment - "It works," Richard Mills, Vermont's Education Commissioner was quoted as stating - the actual

test results in mathematics were just as pitiful as standard testing had been showing. The New York Times' report of the Vermont testing is worth quoting at length: "The mathematics portfolios were assessed using seven criteria, with four levels of performance for each criterion. Four of the seven criteria were related to problem solving and three to the communication of the results. Most of the students were shown to understand the problems. In the fourth grade, 71 percent of the students understood, and in the eighth grade 88 percent did. But in evaluating the quality of the approaches or procedures used to solve problems, 47 percent of fourth graders and 50 percent of eighth graders were found to use effective strategies.

"The proportions decline further when the question is whether the student is making reasoned decisions in solving the problems: 13 percent of fourth graders inferred correctly and with certainty as compared to 21 percent of eighth graders. And students almost completely failed to synthesize, or make generalizations, from their problem solving. Virtually no fourth grader made connections or applications from the problems they solved, and only 4 percent of eighth graders did so.

"The mathematics ability of the Vermont students reflected the poor mathematics skills of most American students as documented in state-by-state comparisons made public by the National Assessment of Educational Progress [a Federal agency]."

What the testing seemed to show is that at best Vermont's school children could tell if a specific problem involved addition or multiplication, but then could not successfully either add or multiply or have any sense of understanding of these actions beyond their being memorized procedures. In classic schooling, such mathematical mindlessness would have been caught and corrected in the primary grades.

The Piagetian approach to the teaching of mathematics, old or new, is based upon Piaget's theoretical observations that mathematics stems from the child's logico-mathematical mind which evidences itself in the pre-school child with his /her interest in classification and seriation. The fact that a pre-school child is also interested in numbers, especially in counting, is dismissed by Piaget as adult imposed or reflective and therefore of no interest.[24] Consequently, school children, especially first graders, spend endless hours with number lines, sets, and patterns. When they do get around to math, the teacher is forbidden from "telling," and the most that can be hoped for are workbooks and worksheets, from which the child is supposed to self-learn mathematics. Since the child is theoretically learning on a sub-linguistic level, it is impossible to verbally test the child as to how much he or she knows, what progress has been made, or any other tangible knowledge about the child's conscious understanding. It is no wonder therefore that teachers can be unaware of a child's level of knowing,

especially if the child completes the work sheets in a seemingly satisfactory manner. It leads to the kind of absurd contradictions evidenced by the Vermont testing.

The math worksheets from which the child is supposed to self-learn by "getting it" would be useful if accompanied by a teacher's verbal explanations, by "telling." Since this is not permitted, the child tends to work these sheets like playing a Nintendo game with little conscious concern beyond procedures and following illustrative examples.

To compound the problems for the elementary school child, the mathematics profession has decided that there should be a "whole" math approach. Math, even for first graders, begins with Numbers and Numeration, Probability and Statistics, Geometry and Measurement, each a "strand" that is carried through the school years. The "old" math had as its subject matter the number as a measure of a presumed reality. Starting with one plus one equals what?, it built its understanding of primary school mathematics, easily explainable with ordinary language and deductive reasoning. The new math with its set theory and stress on patterns defies such teaching - 5 plus 2 equals 7 becomes a "fact family" rather than a problem in addition.[25]

An example of the rigid ideological mind-set of our mathematics-educator establishment was reflected in their recent multi-volume review of Soviet math teaching, a study initially prompted by Sputnik, the world's first manned space ship. America's educators were startled to discover how advanced Soviet public school children were in math, far ahead of America's children. They were even more upset upon finding that the Soviet's developmental psychology in math involved instructional teaching. They then denounced the Soviet math success as mere "formalism" despite all evidence to the contrary, using as "proof" two American books on Piagetian math theory. They never did explore the truly remarkable results attained with Soviet academic methods. Instead, they prefaced the relevent volume with a stern warning to American math teachers that they must not adopt instructional "telling."[26]

In classic academic math teaching, math is stressed not only for its importance in today's world which relies so heavily on science and technology but as well for its value in teaching children logical, analytical and critical thinking, and the virtues of ordinary, orderly and rational

thinking, using reason and common sense. This classic virtue of knowing and thinking as intimately bound with understanding has disappeared from today's classrooms where children are pressed to "get it" by following procedures and too often end up lost in a process world like that Alice found awaiting her down the rabbit hole.

Literacy, knowing how to read and write, continues to be claimed by the romantics as a goal of primary grades. Piaget had very little to say about the subject since he considered thinking as independent of language. He saw it as a mere problem in pegadogy. Rousseau, however, had some quite remarkable comments about reading and learning how to read. He disdained the idea of children reading before the age of twelve, for until then children were only to receive what he called a "negative education," one free from books and restricted to a child's self-learning in contact with the natural world. A child's years between the ages of six and twelve were to be treated as the Age of Nature, an approach that has colored the romantic view of education during those years. The child was not to be "taught" to read, but was to self-teach as desire and necessity dictated, learning to read through a whole-word recognition process,

the details of which Rousseau left unstated. Whole-word has been the established reading method ever since for the romantics. Reading by learning phonics, the historic method amplified by the Hebrews and the Greeks, has been discarded and whole-word has been enthroned in its many variations, including the contemporary Whole Language system.

Many arguments have been developed by the romantics to defend whole-word reading "process," to justify a learning-how-to-read program which has repeatedly shown itself to be inferior in results to classic phonics. Commonly heard at one time was that phonics teaching was too stressful and difficult for the child since English has some words that follow odd rules or no rules at all. But the many hundreds of thousands of parents who have taken Rudolph Flesch's advice and taught their children to read by way of phonics have learnt that such teaching is neither difficult nor stressful and that within six months of daily half-hour lessons, the child will be reading on his or her own. And the extended researches by Professor Chall of phonics teaching in the ordinary classroom points to the same lack of foundation for such anxieties by teachers or parents.[27]

Whole Language (listening, speaking, reading, writing) is the latest in the string of whole word reading methods, none of which have proved to be successful despite over sixty years of experimentation. Unlike earlier reading

programs such as See-and-Say which at least recognized the difference between written and spoken language, Whole Language confuses them. Enamored of the fact that children learn to speak and use language with little in the way of adult "telling," educators believe that if the child can be surrounded by the printed word as by the mileau of spoken words, that the child will spontaneously make the connection between oral and written and self-learn to read and to write at his or her oral level. It is a theoretical conceit, drawn from Rousseau and Piaget, that is no more than a fancy, bearing little if any relationship to research in language, speech, thought or the structure of the brain.

To make it work, they have introduced a leavening of phonics, but in the distorted, unsystematic fashion common to the romantic approach to academic studies. Nevertheless, every bit of phonics learning does help, as Professor Chall has pointed out. Romantic educators like to exhibit middle class children who have learnt to read simply by being read to by their parents. They suggest that this proves that how children learn to read is truly a mystery for which no one knows the secret, thereby justifying their own lack of success. An unscientific survey made of such "mystery" education reveals, however, that the parents are consciously or unwittingly giving the child lessons in how to read during such sessions and that they are also so

anxious to show how bright their child is that they fail to mention that they've not only taught the child their ABCs but also their phonics.

A frequently heard rationale given for whole-word (or gestalt or holistic) methodology is that this is teaching to read for meaning rather than merely reading words. It is an argument that sounds profound but that bears no relationship to the reality of alphabetic writing or classic learning. Our writing method, invented some three to four thousand years ago is a simulation of speech by using letters to represent sounds. The meaning resides in the words, whether read silently or aloud, and not in their written form. The question is then what is the most effective way to decipher writing and the answer is unquestionably by reversing the writing process by way of phonetic reading. Academic teaching of how to read with phonics has always been intimately bound with literature (meaning based), whether the writings were Homer, Aesop, the Bible, Shakespeare or graded readers.

Another justification by romantic educators for using Whole Language is their claim that by not "telling," by making students learn through their own spontaneous and "active" thinking, by guessing contextually and with picture clues, they are thereby both conforming to the Piagetian science of child cognitive development and encouraging creativity and individuality. It is an argument built on the fear that conscious intellectual knowing somehow crushes creativity, that fails to understand that a child eagerly

desires explanations and understandings. It ignores the need for every child to attain a mature individuality not by relying on what he or she and peers may think but by counterposing this with civilization's thinking.

Romantic educators are also blinded by their view that reading and writing are merely skills, like riding a bike, and can be learnt in the same sublinguistic manner of "getting it." It prevents them from appreciating this great invention of humankind. There is no reason that alphabetic writing cannot be taught to children for what it is, making this crucial knowledge, fundamental for futher education, available for all to readily learn regardless of social background, as Professor Chall has shown. It is indicative of the power of the romantic ideology that America, for all its profession of concern for the poor and disadvantaged, continues to use a system for learning how to read and write that is notoriously class biased, leaving the great bulk of America's students with only a mediocre knowledge of this fundamental subject and with too many others left minimally literate.

A clear example of the bias of the Whole Language teaching system is evident in the elementary schools of Manhattan, New York, where economic and social class differences define distinct communities. Of their 79 public schools tested for reading in 1991, the top nine schools where at least seven out of ten students were

reading at or above grade level were in Manhattan's most upscale neighborhoods - Tribeca, Greenwich Village(2), Upper East Side(2), Peter Cooper Village, Cloisters, Upper West Side and one in Harlem Heights. For the seventy other Manhattan elementary schools, the reading scores show that barely one out of every three children are reading at grade level. This disparity in education levels has been accepted by the romantic educators not as evidence of their failure but of society's failure for having so many poor and disadvantaged people. We would seem to be back to a merely sophisticated version of justifying sharp class divisions by pointing, once again, to the uneducatability of the lower classes.[28]

No one questions that poverty and discrimation leave their marks, but schools using modern classic methodology can successfully overcome the worst of the stresses. The teacher only recognizes slow learners and bright learners, qualities of the individual child and not of social class. Historically, in America's pre-romantic times when modern classic educational methods were used the results were readily evident: the children of the poor and disadvantaged became the nation's doctors, lawyers, educators, judges, architects, scientists, business men, artists, etc.

A recent example of the effectiveness of phonic teaching makes abundantly clear its lack of a social class bias in teaching every child how to read and write. In the 1991 test scores for reading in New York City's public

schools, an ordinary Queens elementary school showed an exceptional jump. Its ranking went from the mediocre, with about half its students reading at or above grade level, to scoring among the best, despite the fact that the school population in a lower middle class neighborhood would be classed as "disadvantaged." Its children were 76% black, 16% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and the rest Others.[29]

The reason for the school's success was that a new principal, dissatisfied with the results being obtained by the Whole Language method, installed a straightforward phonics program. The school's new ranking in reading scores placed it as the seventy-fifth best of the city's six hundred and nineteen elementary schools, on a par with Manhattan's elite Greenwich Village schools.

Some romantic educators stress their trust and belief in developmental psychology, confusedly thinking that Piagetian theory and developmental psychology are one and the same. As every parent fully knows, each child goes though a long period of individual, though common, developmental growth with distinct stages of maturing physical, emotional, and mental abilities. Education has traditionally been

geared to long recognized developmental stages. The developmental psychologists of the twentieth century have been seeking to analyze and understand this maturation. Piaget's particular version is highly idiosyncratic and would appear to have derived from seeking a scientific basis for the spectacularly novel thinking of Rousseau and his education for the noble savage.

The most famous of the non-Piagetian developmental psychologists and certainly the least understood in America was the ill-fated Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky. When the British in their report on elementary schools wrote that "learning is essentially a social and interactive process," they were virtually quoting Vygotsky in his attack on Piaget.[30]

Vygotsky's most important work on child development and education, "Thought and Speech," was published in the Soviet Union in 1934, the year of his death from tuberculosis at the age of thirty-eight. It was both a rebuttal to Piaget's theories and an exposition of his own, based on extensive research, on the origins and development of thought. Two years later, a Soviet decree banning Progressive Education led, paradoxically, to the supression of Vygotsky's work. Though he had boldly opposed Progressive Education, his work was associated with paedological research which was no longer considered politically correct. The suppression did not eradicate his influence but drove it underground, to reemerge publicly after Stalin's death.[31]

In America, "Thought and Speech" was not published until 1962, appearing under the title "Thought and Language"

in a highly abridged edition, with an introduction by Piaget. The original text was cut in half, eliminating much of his critique of Piaget. It was such a distorted version that Piaget could claim that Vygotsky largely agreed with him, with only minor differences, despite the fact that the full text is essentially a running refutation of Piaget and a clear exposition of Vygotsky's counter-theory.

A complete edition was not published in America until 1986, by which time, unfortunately, his views had taken on a highly deformed shape within the academic community, where he has been dismissed as a psycholinguist or as a a minor Piaget critic.

If Piaget can be said to have provided the scientific justification for Rousseau's romantic yearnings, Vygotsky can be considered the modern developmental psychologist who provided the scientific explanation for how a classic education's didactic teaching worked, how it was in synchronization with the natural development of the child.

Piaget believed that during a child's elementary school years, roughly between the ages of six and twelve, there was a conflict between the child's internalized thinking and what the adult world was telling him or her. That, in effect, they were at war, and that it was the child's role to put to death adult "telling" and to create his or her own knowledge of the world rather than merely being a passive receptor of society's ready-made thinking. This war, according to Piaget, would go on until the child reached

twelve years of age at which time he or she would have attained the cognitive ability to hypothesize and would then join the adult world with its give and take of thoughts expressed through language. Accordingly, it should be the role of schools and parents never to "tell" children, but to act only as stage managers in putting before the child those concrete operational materials as they fit a child's individual readiness, thereby nurturing the child's spontaneous and internalized thinking. He strongly opposed the idea that thinking and language were, at this stage, interrelated, insisting that internalized thinking was taking place at a sub-linguistic level and that adult teaching was merely verbal realism.

Vygotsky saw no war taking place between the child's thinking and the adult teaching. For him, the naive thinking of the child had to be reaching questionable conclusions for how could it be otherwise. He therefore defined the school or adult role as the teacher of civilization's knowledge, which the child would then juxtapose against his or her own thinking and that of peers, arriving at a satisfactory concept that would then be internalized. The teacher was no mere facilitator but played an active and decisive role in the learning of the child, using all the various pedagogical techniques that provide understanding and explanation. It was the child as a member of society that was of central importance. Language

served as the great human communicator not only for adults but for children as well, influencing and shaping their thinking as much as it does that of adults. Instruction, telling, teaching were for Vygotsky key elements in a child's education, supplying the necessary interaction between adult and child that enabled a child's cognitive growth and development, yet without ever suppressing or limiting the intuitive and spontaneous.

Vygotsky questioned the Piagetian presumption that it was fruitless to teach a child a subject before the child indicated his or her "readiness." While accepting the obvious observation that each child develops at its own pace, he was a great believer in the extraordinary role that teaching played. He considered instruction and learning highly interactive and interenhancing, and concluded that teaching should necessarily precede a presumed readiness, a standard of modern academic schools.

Lately, in America, it has become fashionable among some romantic educators to say they eclecticly incorporate Vygotsky's theories, but they are adept at semantics. For example, they continue to insist that they teach phonics, "the best of phonics," though all that they present to children is a highly unsystematic and partial version. They have also announced that kindergarten children on up are all to be known as emergent readers, instead of being at various stages of readiness for reading. Recently, bending to popular concerns, they have announced that they now stress

instruction and academics but without altering in any way their prohibition against a teacher teaching.

Piaget largely restricted his research studies to what was objectively measurable, omitting those fields which were man's creation, such as reading and writing, literature, history, and the arts. An important deviation was a major study of the moral judgement of children. He had realized that an interactive social setting was vital for any theory of cognitive development to counter arguments that he had placed such development outside and independent of society. The child social peer group, with its superficial appearance of independence from adults, provided Piaget with his desired social setting.

John Dewey had earlier sought a method of avoiding what he saw as classic education's "individualism" which he equated not with the democratic American spirit of the masses but with the evils of Robber Baron capitalism. Dewey proposed an education of cooperation, based on collaborative group learning. This carried a contradiction with his emphasis on individualized child-centered teaching as necessary for an effective education but it was ignored.

Piaget found in Dewey's program a key to his similar concerns but claimed a "scientific" conclusion after extensive observations of children, generally at play where he presumed they made up their own rules. He extrapolated his findings into a broad concept called "socialization" which incorporated Dewey's cooperation.

As with a child's cognitive development, he found a child's moral thinking in direct conflict with adult morals, with the moral view of children superior to that of the adult world. Children arrived at this achievement not as individuals but as members of their peer group, hence the absolute need for schools to foster "socialization" in which children would establish their own concepts of moral behavior, independent of adults. He called the attempt of adults, whether parents or teachers, to teach society's values a wasted effort. According to Piaget, children would (and should) reject such teachings as "moral realism," in the same way that they reject the "verbal realism" of instructional academic teaching.

"The sense of justice," he concluded, "...requires nothing more for its development than the mutual respect and solidarity which holds among children themselves."[32] A charming belief but hardly tenable in the real world for it completely ignores parents' and society's constant efforts at the education of their children to moral and ethical precepts. Remove these efforts and children's "sense of justice" may disappear as in Golding's "The Lord of the Flies."

Since the Dewey concept of cooperative learning and the Piaget principle of socialization are both deeply embedded in America's romantic school system, there is the obvious result that our schools are promoting the idea among children that only their peer group thinking counts.

Children are encouraged to believe that their peer moral views are more important than those of home and society. With such a message being given daily, it is no wonder that our schools have a continuing difficulty overcoming this peer thinking to enable children to deal successfully with such complex problems as drugs, crime, sex and AIDS.

Integral to Piaget's socialization was his developmental theories of childhood. He believed that during babyhood, from birth to about three, children were individualistic, lacking the capabilities of anything else. From three to about seven, they were egocentric, incapable of understanding that others could have points of view different from their's. They then gradually lost egocentricity via socialization to begin to become at about the age of twelve those socialized communal members that Piaget held as mankind's highest development.

According to Piaget, all the classic education of the past has been teacher "telling" which he argued pushed children backwards into egocentricity, thereby thwarting the emergence of socialized-cooperative man. In short, his program is an ideology that would rescue civilization, providing a new direction. It is Rousseau again condemning contemporary society, hating intellectual Athens, and full of praise for the communalism of ancient Sparta.

Piaget, of course, was mistaken. It is now generally accepted that the child is a social being from the moment of birth and never loses this innate quality. Infant

"mothering" is now understood as demonstrating a complex interplay with a child's introduction into society taking place immediately and not indicative of a Piagetian individualism. The supposed egocentricity of the three to seven year old has also been reevaluated as a misreading of the evidence. The child's presumed egocentric talk is either social talk or thinking aloud with the newly acquired apparatus of speech. The child has also been demonstrated to have at any early age an awareness of the points of view of others. Piaget's theory of childhood egocentricity - the foundation for his general developmental theory - has been found erroneous.

Modern classic educators argue that we are always social beings and that each of us finds a fulfilling maturity in all of society, not in Piaget's spurious socialization. Our highest development comes in individual growth in a society with principles of democracy, rather than in submission to Rousseau's General Will or its equivalent contrived version of an imposed "cooperation" as propounded by Dewey and Piaget.

The differences between the classic and Piagetian approaches broadly impact on a child's early education. The modern classic stresses that each child, in working with the teacher, attains conscious knowledge thereby gradually breaking out of the bounds of the sublinguistic. In

so doing, the child is also learning to understand the world objectively. The Piagetian method, however, enforces remaining within a peer frame of thinking, stunting personal growth, and leading to a peer group narcissism and introversion.

In one of those strange warps of thinking, common to ideologues, America's educators have yet to accept any responsibility for the dreadful shambles of our public education. Instead, they look with disdain upon successful modern classic academic systems, insisting that they must be failures for that is what their ideology tells them. Meanwhile, we remain stuck in a reactionary morass, captive to an educational philosophy whose central devotion is not to educate but to use education to effect a change in our society à là Rousseau or Dewey or Piaget.

America pioneered modern classic education, the underpinning for our democratic way of life, that is now used so successfully throughout the world. A return to its philosophy could once again make our education of children the envy of nations instead of the noneducation that it is today.

THE END

FOOTNOTES

1. All references to British reform and British report are Alexander, R., Rose, J. Woodhead, C., Curriculum Organization and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools, Department of Education and Science, London, 1992.

2. "Rivals agree on need for national school standards but differ on U.S. role," by Susan Chira, New York Times, Oct. 23, 1992.

3. E.g. "Savage Equalities," by Peter Shrag, New Republic, Dec. 16,1991. "Money's role questioned in Schools Debate," by Susan Chira, New York Times, May 4, 1991. "North Dakota, math country," by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, New York Times, Op-Ed page, February 3, 1992.

4. National Education Goals Panel report released Sept. 30, 1992. United States Department of Education, Washington,D.C.

5. For Athenian, Spartan, and classical education: Marrou, H. I., A History of Education in Antiquity, University of Wisconsin Press, 1982.

6. Rousseau's educational theories are elaborated in "Emile," his 1762 treatise in the form of a novel: Rousseau, J.-J., Emile, translated by Barbara Foxley, introduction by P. D. Jimack, J. M. Dent & Sons, 1974.

7. For Spartan influence on Rousseau: Rawson, E., The Spartan Tradition in European Thought, Oxford University Press, 1969.

8. David Elkind, Piaget's noted American follower, defined these stages as: 0 - 2, sensory motor ("motor control"); 2 - 7, preoperational ("intuitive resoning"); 7 - 11, concrete operational ("responds logically to objects, classes, and relations but not to verbal propositions and cannot formulate concepts verbally"); 11 - 15, formal operational ("can define concepts and can reason logically, systematically and symbolically"). Encyclopedia Americana, 1985, vol.22, p. 60.

For Piaget's early philosophical interest in Rousseau, see his "Recherche," published in 1922, the year after he was appointed Director of Studies at the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute in Geneva. Republished in Gruber, H. E., Voneche, J.J., editors, The Essential Piaget; An Interpretive Reference and Guide, Basic Books, 1977.

For Piaget's later (1935) acknowledgement of Rousseau's role, see Piaget, J., Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child, Orion Press, 1970, pages 139-142.

9. Bringuier, J.-C., Conversations with Jean Piaget, University of Chicago Press, 1980, page 34.

10. For Piaget's ideas on education, see Piaget 1970, op.cit.; on his theories, Gruber 1977, op. cit.; Piaget, J., The Language and Thought of the Child, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959.; and Piaget, J., The Moral Judgement of the Child, Free Press, 1965.

11. This is revisionist history of Horace Mann and the Common Schools. For "official" history, from the point of view of the romantics, see e.g. Church, R. L., Education in the United States, Free Press, 1976, chapter 4.

12. For an excellent study of mid-western "little red schoolhouses" see Fuller, W. E., The Old Country School, University of Chicago Press, 1982; for an historical examination of major New York City school conflicts over the decades, Ravitch, D., The Great School Wars, Basic Books, 1988.

13. From "Primary Education. A Statement by the Secretary of State for Education and Science. 3 December 1991." Department of Education and Science, Stanmore, Great Britain.

14. "Children of the Rainbow, First Grade," published by the New York City Board of Education, 1991, is an American example of often unintelligible and questionable educationese and why actual classroom practices are important. The opening sentence sets the Piagetian approach: "The first grade multicultural curriculum is designed to enable teachers to create learning environments..." - My italics: the words do not refer to architecture or physical setting but to classrooms within which children are to self-learn with teachers acting only in the role of facilitators who will expose the child to "contacts" - such as books - from which the child will learn intuitively such an academic basic as how to read. And so on for 443 pages. The last chapter deals with mathematics and advises, among other things: "A standard for school mathematics is a statement that can be used to judge the quality of mathematics curriculum or methods of evaluation... Operation sense interacts with number sense and enables students to make thoughtful decisions about the reasonableness of results... The children need to understand the attribute to be measured as well as what it means to measure."

15. Dewey's "Democracy and Education", published in 1916, reissued in 1966 by Free Press, is of interest again if only because of the revival of his "cooperative learning" as among the latest (sic) of the panaceas for America's failed educational system. For an anti-Dewey position, Hofstadter, R., Anti-Intellectualism in American Life, Vintage Books, 1962. For a summing up of the Progressive Education movement in America, Ravitch, D.,The Troubled Crusade, American Education, 1845-1980, Basic Books, 1983, chapter 3.

16. Flesch, R., Why Johnny Can't Read, Harper & Row, 1955. Flesch, R., Why Johnny Still Can't Read, Harper & Row, 1975.

17. Chall, J. S., Learning to Read, The Great Debate twenty years later; A response to "Debunking the Great Phonics Myth," Phi Delta Kappan, 70:521-538, 1989.

18. Quoted in "Whose America?" by Paul Gray, Time magazine, July 8, 1991.

19. For the Soviet experience with Progressive Education: L. E. Holmes, "The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse," Indiana University Press, 1991. The quotes are on pages 32 and 135.

20. "How to save science in the classroom," by Leon M. Lederman, New York Times, Op-Ed page, Sept. 5, 1992.

21. Piaget, 1970, op. cit., page 45.

22. "Math survey in public schools shows that no state is 'cutting it,'" by Karen De Witt, New York Times, June 7,1991.

23. "In Vermont schools, test on how well students think draws new interest," by Karen De Witt, New York Times, August 30, 1991.

24. For a contrary view about numbers, Gelman, R., Gallistel, C R., The Child's Understanding of Number, Harvard University Press, 1986, which also makes the point that Piagetians spend excessive time exploring what they believe children cannot do at various "stages" instead of observing their capabilities.

25. Kline, M., Why Johnny Can't Add; The Failure of the New Math, St. Martin's Press, 1973.

26. Davydov, V.V., editor, Soviet Studies in Mathematics Education, Volume 6, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Reston, Virginia, 1991. The Preface, from which I have freely extrapolated the gist of the American reaction, was written by Leslie P. Steffe. While he writes warmly of "interactive" communication between teacher and student, he clearly subscribes to the Piagetian view that a child in elementary school classes cannot properly learn math with didactic teaching. This is a Piaget claim that neither he nor his followers have proved. Indeed, all the empirical evidence points in the opposite direction.

27. Flesch, R. 1955 and Flesch 1975, op. cit., Chall, J.S. Learning to Read; The Great Debate, McGraw Hill, 1969, updated edition, 1983. Chall,J. S., Jacobs, V.A., Baldwin, L.E. The Reading Crisis; Why Poor Children Fall Behind, Harvard University Press, 1990.

28. "2 schools, 2 results on reading tests," by Joseph Berger, New York Times, April 12, 1991.

29. Ibid.

30. For a recent overview of psychological theories on how children think and learn: Wood, D., How Children Think and Learn; The Social Contexts of Cognitive Development, Basil Blackwell, 1988. Not only are Wood's insights refreshingly free of cant but he writes with a clarity and readability that is a great relief from the turgid prose of Piaget and his followers. Like others who have questioned Piaget's theories, he bases his findings on what happens in classrooms rather than extrapolating from theory to pedagogy which is typically Piagetian. Wood is also interesting as an original non-Piagetian theorist, admittedly influenced by Jerome Bruner.

31. Vygotsky, L., Thought and Language, translation newly revised and edited by A. Kozulin, MIT Press, 1986.; Luria, A.R., The Making of Mind; A Personal Account of Soviet Psychology, edited by M. and S. Cole, Harvard University Press, 1979.; and Valziner, J., Developmental Psychology in the Soviet Union, Indiana University Press, 1988.

32. Piaget 1965, op. cit., p.198.